

14 buffaloes in the attic start a price stampede

by Roger Boye

This week's column answers more questions about old coins and currency.

Q—While cleaning our attic, we found 14 buffalo nickels with readable dates. Isn't there a nickel variety worth hundreds of dollars because of a deformed buffalo? What should we look for?—J.L., Lincoln, Ill.

A—Most likely, - you are thinking of the three-legged [or "Indian-head"] nickel minted in 1937. Staffers at the Denver Mint polished one of the nickel dies too aggressively that year, rubbing off the buffalo's right front leg.

Machines made several thousand nickels depicting a crippled buffalo before the die wore out. Today some collectors will pay from \$100 for a three-legged nickel in "good condition" to \$750 or more for an uncirculated specimen, according to catalogues.

Of course, forgers have distributed many counterfeits over the years. The missing leg on an authentic 1937-D error coin has a moth-eaten appearance, experts say.

Bureaucrats issued buffalo nickels from 1913 to 1938, but the 1937 is the only coin with such a deformity.

Q—We found a worn \$5 bill, series 1950-C, with a rare printing error; the words "In God We Trust" are missing from the back side. How much is it worth?—R.E., Chicago.

A—Just \$5. Government printers added the motto to \$5 bills in 1964; your specimen—as did all series 1950-C Federal Reserve notes—rolled off the press in 1961 or 1962.

Q—My great-grandfather put a hole in a 1904 silver dollar so he could wear the coin on a watch chain. What might the piece be worth today?—F.J., Chicago.

A—Coins like yours have little value beyond their metal content.

Q—Which Susan B. Anthony dollars do you think are worth collecting? Are dimes made during the Bicentennial year worth anything?—L.D., Napoleon, Ohio.

A—Anthonys taken from circulation have little, if any, value on the hobby market, regardless of date or mint mark.

Uncle Sam churned out more than 1.2 billion Roosevelt dimes in 1976, making them one of the most common dates in the series.

● Several government dignitaries will be in West Point, N.Y., Tuesday to watch production of the first Olympic \$10 gold pieces, the only U.S. coins so far to carry "W" mint marks. Workers will make the 1984-dated commemoratives on machinery located in the West Point Bullion Depository, putting nearly a half-ounce of gold in each piece.

Treasury Secretary Donald T. Regan is expected to activate equipment for the initial strike.